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Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* Security Council extends mission in Haiti for final four months until 30 June; reduces number of troops and civilian police.

* Secretary-General says Rwandan Government has strong reservations about UN troop presence; therefore, no alternative to UNAMIR withdrawal after mandate ends on 8 March.

* UN launches $823 million inter-agency appeal for Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighbouring republics.

* UNHCR needs $60 million for its voluntary repatriation programme in Liberia.

* IAEA will coordinate and manage radiological study of Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls in French Polynesia, beginning next week.

* General Assembly should adopt declaration on basic principles for peace-keeping and dispute settlement, according to Russian Federation.

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The Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) for a final four months until 30 June. Troop levels will be decreased to no more than 1,200 and the number of civilian police to no more than 300 personnel. In unanimously adopting resolution 1048 (1996), last night, the Council said the Mission aimed to help the Haitian Government sustain the secure and stable environment already established and professionalize the national police.

The Secretary-General was asked to take appropriate steps to further reduce the Mission's strength, consistent with its mandate. He was also asked to initiate planning by 1 June for UNMIH's complete withdrawal and to report to the Council by 15 June on the resolution's implementation, including United Nations activities to promote development in the country.

The Council asked all countries to support the United Nations and Member States actions in Haiti and to make generous, voluntary contributions to cover

(more)

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the Mission's costs. It also appealed for voluntary contributions for the trust fund set up to support the national police. The Council reiterated the commitment of the international community and financial institutions to support Haiti's social, economic and institutional development and stressed how important that was for sustaining a secure and stable environment.

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Given the present circumstances there seemed no alternative to the complete withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) after its current mandate expired on 8 March, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report to the Security Council, dated 29 February, he said the United Nations still had a useful role to play in Rwanda, however, the Government had not consented to any of the options proposed by his Special Representative, Shaharyar Khan, and had expressed strong reservations to the presence of UN troops in the country after 8 March.

Three post-UNAMIR options were proposed: a) a small political office which would help the Government promote national reconciliation, strengthen the judicial system, facilitate the return of refugees and rebuild the country's infrastructure; b) an office plus a military component to monitor and provide logistical support for the return of refugees; c) a regional office to promote security, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

Despite significant progress towards normalcy, Rwanda's relative peace was threatened as long as more than 1.5 million refugees were camped along its borders, the Secretary-General said. Former Rwandan army elements and organized militias added to the threat and intimidated refugees from returning home. However, the refugees were also uncertain about security conditions inside Rwanda. The deployment of UN troops, particularly in areas where large numbers were expected to return, could speed up repatriation by building confidence and providing much needed logistical support, he added.

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The United Nations today launched an Inter-Agency humanitarian appeal for $823 for Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighbouring republics. For the first time, a UN appeal will cover repatriation in the war-ravaged region. Under the Dayton Peace Agreement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is responsible for the return of 2 million refugees and displaced persons in Bosnia. The Agency estimates the programme will cost $353 million in 1996.

An estimated 40,000 people have already returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina, with or without UNHCR help, since the signing of the Dayton Agreement in December. According to the Agency, building confidence among the

population is particularly important. While there have been some successes for example in Travnik and Jajce, there have been problems in places like Mostar, Bugojno and Sarajevo, where thousands of Serb residents have recently fled suburbs which are coming under the Bosnian Federation's control. The UNHCR has a presence in all Serb suburbs and has brought in additional staff to try and bolster confidence among the remaining Serbs.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) made an urgent appeal today for $60 million for its voluntary repatriation programme in Liberia. Since the signing of a peace agreement last August, an estimated 30,000 refugees have returned from the border areas of Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, most in the last two months. However, lack of funds and sporadic clashes have prevented the UNHCR from giving relief to the refugees, except on an ad hoc basis.

According to the UNHCR, it is seeking funds because so many refugees are willing to repatriate and it did not want to be unprepared if the return gathers momentum. The appeal will cover costs of transportation and logistics, food, crop production, shelter, health services and income generation.

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A study of the radiological situation at the Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls in French Polynesia will begin next week. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will manage and coordinate the project, which was requested by the French Government. It has agreed to provide the IAEA with information and data for the approximately 18-month long study.

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The General Assembly should adopt a declaration on basic principles for United Nations peace-keeping missions and dispute settlement mechanisms, according to a representative of the Russian Federation. Vladimir Fedorov told the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, yesterday, that his Government's working paper on the draft declaration was meant to codify criteria, principles and general United Nations practice. They would guide the Security Council, regional organizations and agencies in solving conflicts and disputes.

Mr. Fedorov said the United Nations did not have a set of written guiding principles on how to tackle the new kinds of conflicts such as ethnic, religious and other intra-State disputes, that now plagued many parts of the world. Their increase had caught the international community unprepared, he added.

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